DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 123 SP 039 082

AUTHOR	Blase, Jo; Blase, Joseph
TITLE	Leadership for Staff Development: Supporting the Lifelong Study of Teaching and Learning.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	20p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Action Research; Administrator Characteristics; Adult Development; Classroom Research; Educational Resources; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Inservice Teacher Education; *Instructional Leadership; Leaders; *Leadership Qualities; Principals; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Collaboration; *Teacher Improvement; Teacher Researchers
IDENTIFIERS	Peer Coaching

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the characteristics of instructional leaders that positively influenced classroom teaching, noting the personal and professional effects of leader-teacher interactions and whether staff development emerged as a primary theme of effective instructional leadership. A group of 809 teachers nationwide provided detailed descriptions of instructional leaders' characteristics that impacted their teaching, the areas of impact and effectiveness of the instructional leaders' actions, and their thoughts about such actions. Results indicated that instructional leaders' characteristics profoundly impacted teachers' classroom behavior, leading to powerful cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects on teachers. Effective instructional leaders frequently provided staff development opportunities that addressed emergent instructional needs. The hallmark of effective staff development was a philosophy of, and support for, lifelong learning about teaching and learning. Staff development, as a key aspect of effective instructional leadership, consistently centered on six elements: the study of teaching and learning; collaboration; coaching; action research; resources; and adult development. Implications for staff developers are presented. (Contains 13 references.) (SM)

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ED 439 123

LEADERSHIP FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT: SUPPORTING THE LIFELONG STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Jo Blase, Professor
Joseph Blase, Professor
University of Georgia
College of Education
Department of Educational Leadership
River's Crossing
850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602-4808
Telephone: 706/613-8226
jblase@coe.uga.edu

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LEADERSHIP FOR
STAFF DEVELOPMENT: SUPPORTING THE
LIFELONG STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

A study of 809 educators from across the United States illuminates basic themes of instructional leadership with particular attention to six elements of effective staff development that lead to powerful impacts on teachers: the study of teaching and learning, building a culture of collaboration, promoting coaching, using inquiry to drive staff development, providing resources to support growth and development, and applying the principles of adult development to staff development efforts.

LEADERSHIP FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT: SUPPORTING THE LIFELONG STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Alternative Title: In the Teachers' Own Words: Six Powerful Elements of Effective Staff Development

Recent efforts to democratize schools have included efforts to empower teachers and professionalize teaching, notably in the areas of instructional leadership and staff development. In particular, "supervision," as the external imposition of bureaucratic, rational authority, has been challenged by many who work to professionalize teaching. As a result, many of today's successful schools are fast becoming centers of shared inquiry and decision making; teachers are moving toward a collective--not an individual--practice of teaching. They are collaborating with each other and with supervisors in a "kind of mutual nudging in the profoundly cooperative search for answers" to instructional problems (Dowling & Sheppard, 1976, p. 5). Instructional leadership is being shared with teachers, and in its best forms it is being cast as coaching, reflection, collegial investigation, study teams, explorations into uncertain matters, and problem solving. Alternatives, not directives or criticism, are the focus, and administrators and teachers work together as a "community of learners" engaged in professional and moral (even noble) service to students.

Unfortunately, the relationships among leadership behavior, staff development, and classroom teaching remain relatively unexamined. Clearly, what exists about critical aspects of instructional leadership vis-à-vis teacher development is largely exploratory.

What We Know About Staff Development

For more than a quarter of a century, Bruce Joyce, director of Booksend Laboratories in Pauma Valley, California, has been studying teacher' repertoires and synthesizing research on teaching models. He and his colleagues have produced valuable resources to help educators enhance their skills and use varied, research-based strategies to help students learn. Joyce et al. have also reviewed the literature in the areas of curricula, teaching, learning, training, and staff development; have conducted large-scale initiatives for school renewal; and have completed research involving thousands of teachers, administrators, agencies, districts, states, organizations, and foreign countries.

From these sources, Joyce and his colleagues have produced solid evidence of the potential effects of instructional innovations such as teaching skills and technologies, and they have demonstrated these effects by using the most rigorous scientific methods, in the form of effect sizes (often measured as the difference between an experimental and a control group, computed in terms of standard deviations; see Glass, 1982, and Joyce & Calhoun, 1996, for more details).

Indeed, from volumes of data, extensive research, and many years of practice, Joyce and his colleagues produced a vision of an effective staff development system. His recent book with Beverly Showers, Student Achievement Through Staff Development (Joyce & Showers, 1995), deals with planning a comprehensive staff development system to support teaching and learning.

This book also discusses the governance, design, and implementation of a system's elements and programs.

A Study Enhancing Joyce's Approach

Our study sought to broaden Joyce's approach, and we learned a great deal about instructional leaders' strategies, behaviors, attitudes, and goals vis-à-vis staff development. (Note that although in many cases instructional supervisors are, in fact, school principals, they may also be lead teachers, department chairpersons, curriculum directors, and staff developers). To accomplish this, we fashioned a large study of over 800 teachers who provided detailed reports of their leaders' instructionally-related actions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our study was to investigate the broad question, what characteristics (e.g., strategies, behaviors, attitudes, goals) of instructional leaders positively influence classroom teaching? (Adverse effects were also investigated and are reported in another article). We wanted to know the personal and professional effects of leader-teacher interactions and whether staff development emerged as a primary theme of effective instructional leadership.

Data Collection and Analysis

To encourage teachers' free expression and inclusion of details, we used a special protocol wherein data collection and analysis were consistent with symbolic interaction theory. Symbolic interaction, in contrast to some qualitative research approaches, stresses individual perception and interpretation. In this approach, data are analyzed to produce descriptive categories, themes, and conceptual and theoretical understandings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

We gathered data by administering an inventory to a total of 809 teachers from southeastern, midwestern, and northwestern United States. Participants included men and women from rural, urban, and suburban locations; elementary and secondary schools; with a range of content areas and years of experience in teaching. Teachers were asked to provide detailed descriptions of instructional leaders' characteristics that impacted their teaching, the areas of impact and effectiveness of the instructional leaders' actions, and their thoughts about such actions. We analyzed each reported characteristic to determine its impact on teachers' feelings, thinking, and behavior as related to classroom teaching.

Findings of the Study

Our findings suggest that instructional leaders' characteristics profoundly impact on teachers' classroom behavior; indeed, they lead to powerful cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects on teachers. Three primary themes define effective instructional leadership: talking with teachers, promoting teachers' professional growth, and fostering teacher reflection. We call this the TiGeR approach to instructional leadership (see Blase & Blase, forthcoming). We describe below some specifics of the second theme: promoting teachers' professional growth via staff development.

Along these lines, we found that effective instructional leaders frequently provided staff development opportunities that address emergent instructional needs; the meaningfulness of such sessions had substantial effects on teachers. Teacher input into the design and content of staff development, optional attendance, and active participation of the instructional leader also enhanced staff development. Broadly speaking, we learned that instructional leaders use staff

development to provide the following conditions for teachers to learn about, synthesize, and enact various teaching strategies:

- Opportunities to study the professional literature and proven programs
- Demonstrations of new skills
- Practice of new skills
- Support from peer coaches
- Assistance in studying student learning through action research (i.e., gathering data about student achievement)
- Assistance in studying how new strategies are implemented and how they affect students

Six Powerful Elements of Staff Development

We found that the hallmark of effective staff development is a philosophy of and support for lifelong learning about teaching and learning. We also discovered that staff development, as a key aspect of effective instructional leadership, is consistently centered on six elements: the study of teaching and learning, collaboration, coaching, action research, resources, and adult development.

1. The Study of Teaching and Learning

To foster innovation in teaching (methods, materials, technology) and to increase student learning, principals who were effective instructional leaders helped faculty members stay informed about current trends and issues. This was accomplished by distributing the professional literature and journal articles; inviting critical discussion of research and trends; supporting attendance at

workshops, seminars, and conferences; and, most importantly, focusing professional development sessions and conversation squarely on teaching and learning issues.

The effects of sharing professional and research literature with teachers were very positive and included increases in teacher motivation, reflection on teaching and learning, and reflectively informed instructional behavior. For example, in terms of the latter, examination of the current literature helped teachers bring more instructional variety ("to get out of the rut") and innovation to the classroom.

In addition, teachers reported that their participation in workshops, seminars, and conferences positively affected their self-esteem and sense of being supported; and that their motivation, classroom reflection, and reflectively informed behavior were impacted most dramatically. For example, teachers discussed increases in innovation and variety of teaching methods in classrooms:

> I want to learn new and more effective ways to engage students and increase learning by attending workshops. My principal is supportive of my natural need to learn new things. She cares enough about me to recognize my positive qualities and support me in fulfilling my need for growth. I think that it is very important to keep abreast of trends and issues in my field. Workshops do that for me. I have tried several of the teaching strategies I have learned. Some work for me and some don't enhance my teaching. I am very aware of all the resources teachers have. My principal

recognizes that I do not want to be just an ordinary teacher. I feel proud and excited.

2. Building A Culture of Collaboration

Studies of innovation show that sustained improvement in teaching often hinges on the development of "teachers-as-learners" who collaborate with one another to study teaching and its effects (Joyce & Showers, 1995). Our data point out that effective instructional leadership was frequently based on related beliefs such as:

- We are all learners; thus school is a "community of learners," including faculty, staff, students, parents, and administrators.
- We are all lifelong learners; thus, our goal is to prepare students for lifelong learning by teaching them (helping them learn) how to learn.
- We are all coaches; thus we learn from each other and help others learn.
- We are all colleagues and collaborators.
- We openly discuss our views and work toward consensus. This includes dialog about curriculum, instruction, and program administration vis-à-vis students, teachers, administrators, supervisors, and parents. Such dialog spans philosophy, belief, literature, and research. (Calhoun's [1994] matrix forms a good basis for such discussions.)

The myriad formal and informal opportunities principals provided for teacher collaboration yielded vast positive results for teachers. Within teachers' enthusiastic comments about collaboration, we found strong impacts on teachers' motivation, self-esteem, confidence, and

ownership of decisions. Also apparent were strong impacts on teacher reflection and reflectively informed instructional behavior (e.g., instructional variety, risk-taking, focus) and, of course, teacher-teacher collaborative interaction itself:

> By observing other teachers, I have been able to think of my own teaching strengths and weaknesses from a new perspective. I have become more willing to ask for help from my principal and fellow teachers. We have all become more open to admitting difficulties and asking for help rather than closing ourselves off and complaining. I am very happy to be valued in that environment.

3. Promoting Coaching

We found substantial evidence that effective instructional leaders advocated coaching among teachers for purposes of teacher development. This happened in two ways. First, principals encouraged teachers to become models for each other. This served to improve teaching, to motivate teachers, to provide recognition of exemplary teachers. Specifically, principals actively encouraged teachers to visit the classrooms of exemplary teachers, asked exemplary teachers to serve as models to other teachers, and encouraged teachers to make presentations within their school and district and at professional conferences:

Teachers reported that modeling good teaching for their colleagues led to greater confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. Modeling for colleagues also increased a teacher's own reflection and reflectively informed behavior. One teacher noted,

> He encourages me to share my teaching techniques with others; it makes me think that what I'm doing is working. Also, having another pair of eyes in my room, whether it be student teachers, recruits, or tenured teachers, makes me want to improve my teaching.

Second, for purposes of professional growth, effective instructional leaders encouraged teachers to visit other schools--to become the learner-- to observe classrooms and programs.

Observing in other classrooms had positive effects on teacher self-esteem and risk-taking; it also yielded greater reflection and reflectively informed behavior in the classroom. One teacher remarked:

> Visiting other schools helped me keep an open mind when approaching new topics. I have felt validated as a professional by my principal. It has encouraged me to develop as a risk taker. I have been better able to make decision about curriculum, and I feel free to use professional judgment in how I implement new strategies.

4. Using Inquiry to Drive Staff Development

Our study showed that an essential part of good staff development was training in collection and analysis of data about student learning. The effective leaders described by teachers in our study attempted to plan and operate staff development as a large-scale action research

project, although they admitted they failed to use action research on student progress to the degree they knew was necessary. One teacher noted:

> The principal uses surveys to determine our needs and our educational background. Then we plan inservices to meet needs as indicated by the survey results.

5. Providing Resources to Support Growth and Improvement

The teachers we studied explained that effective leaders helped to develop faculty by providing essential resources and that this greatly enhanced teacher growth, classroom teaching, and student learning. They provided resources, sometimes in liberal amounts, to support teacher growth and to improve classroom instruction:

> She will let our teachers buy anything within reason that is necessary for teaching effectively. She openly states that instruction of students is our chief priority, and any resource we might need to that end gets first priority.

Classroom materials were the most frequently described available resource (e.g., supplies; subject-matter texts including books and printed matter; manipulatives, games, and kits). Occasionally, instructional leaders gave teachers small amounts of money ($100-$200) to

purchase classroom materials. Several teachers reported that such leaders also provided them with parent volunteers and paraprofessionals. Teachers said:

> She does what she can to provide necessary instructional resources. Our school has a form that teachers can fill out listing the resources they need. The form goes to our teacher council. The teacher has a representative present a rationale for the need. Most often the request is approved and the material is bought immediately.

> She is constantly asking us what resources she can find for us to improve our current teaching or classroom.

Our study produced no evidence that the availability of resources strongly affected teachers' feelings; however, having resources did yield major impacts on teacher reflection and reflectively informed behavior:

> Extra classroom materials help me be creative in my lesson plans. I came up with different activities that students could work on. The extra money allows individual teachers the freedom to buy materials as they see fit.

> Her help [in providing resources] encouraged me to be reflective, be on the cutting edge, and be a risk taker. She encouraged me to jump in. If I messed up, I would say oops and try again! I felt safe. Her emphases were always on personal growth and professionalism. My achievements were her achievements. She was not threatened by my success; she enjoyed it.

6. Applying Principles of Adult Development

Part and parcel of the design and implementation of staff development programs is an understanding of principles of adult development and the conditions that enhance adult learning. Phillips and Glickman (1991) have found that teachers who work in a stimulating and supportive environment can reach higher stages of development. Joyce and Showers (1995) have demonstrated that "virtually all teachers can learn the most powerful and complex teaching strategies, provided that staff development is designed properly" (p. 10). In contrast, the work of Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (1995), which compares actual and optimal teacher development, shows that an oppressive school environment and traditional (e.g., bureaucratic, evaluation-oriented) approaches to supervision often hinder teacher development. As reflected in our findings, instructional leaders worked hard to:

- Adhere to the principles of adult learning
- Respond to and foster teachers' professional stage development
- Recognize and support different phases within teachers' life cycles

- Help teachers to understand, navigate, and learn from life transition events
- Recognize and accommodate teachers' various roles, and
- Enhance teacher motivation

Implications for Staff Developers

Based on the collective reports of over 800 teachers who participated in our study, we suggest that instructional leaders, including principals and all other staff developers, work to enhance teachers' professional development in the following ways:

1. Build an atmosphere and processes of democracy (shared decision making and collective responsibility) and a culture of learning among teachers and administrators.
2. Learn, with the faculty and parents, about school improvement and effective staff development (e.g., attend and participate in staff development sessions).
3. Provide training in action research. (For a basic understanding of action research, we recommend Calhoun's How to Use Action Research in the Self-Renewing School (1994.) This highly useful guide to action research is based on work with educators throughout the world. Among other things, Calhoun describes the phases of effective action research.)
4. Collectively assess the effects of instruction and the climate of the school.
5. Organize a staff development council to coordinate activities (see Wolf, 1994, for guidelines and resources).

6. Focus staff development programs on the areas of curriculum, instruction, and technology, as they are more likely to have effects on student learning.

7. Organize study groups and support their activities.

8. Develop peer coaching relationships and support their activities. (See Joyce & Showers, 1995 and Showers & Joyce, 1996, for more details on Nos. 7 and 8, study groups and peer coaching).

9. Provide time for collaboration for the study of teaching and learning. This will reduce the isolation, not the autonomy, that alienates teachers from each other.

10. Encourage a commitment to spend time studying outcomes, curriculum, and teaching practice rather than administrivia and technical/managerial matters. Put differently, increase time spent on items toward the top of the list below, and decrease time spent on items at the bottom (many educators have this backwards!):

more
- outcomes
- curriculum
- instruction
- technology
- daily concerns/technical matters
- enrichment/gimmicks

less

11. Provide time for study of implementation of innovations in curriculum, teaching, and instruction. (An extensive discussion of teaching-learning models can be found in Joyce and Weil's Models of Teaching [1996]. For highlights of current research on effective

teaching and its relationship to the improvement of learning, see Waxman and Walberg [1991].)

12. Encourage individual teachers to develop instructional goals and objectives and to meet with teachers to discuss their progress.

A Final Note

In this article we have described, at times in the words of teachers themselves, elements of an effective approach to staff development. Our findings about staff development programs in action confirm the importance of reflective professional growth for teachers. Broadly speaking, the fundamental challenge for instructional leaders, as we now see it, is one of building a culture of lifelong learning through inquiry and collaboration.

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